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Viewing cable 06CAIRO4939, GAMAL MUBARAK DISCUSSES BEIRUT TRIP, UPCOMING

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06CAIRO4939	2006-08-10 17:27	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Cairo

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/10/2016
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SUBJECT: GAMAL MUBARAK DISCUSSES BEIRUT TRIP, UPCOMING
CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS WITH CONGRESSMAN ISSA

REF: CAIRO 4335

Classified by Ambassador Francis J. Ricciardone for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: Gamal Mubarak briefed Ambassador and visiting Congressman Darrell Issa August 9 on his August 8 visit to Beirut, at the head of a 70-member Egyptian "solidarity" delegation. He predicted that the Egyptian Parliament's new session (beginning in November) will be "the constitutional reform session." He said that the actual texts of proposed constitutional amendments are not yet available, as "we still need to discuss the details during the September NDP party conference, and then have an open debate in Parliament," but claimed that the reform agenda is clear from the NDP's electoral platform. Mubarak complained that "some circles in Washington" try to "micromanage" the U.S.-Egyptian relationship by focusing on U.S. assistance to the GOE, and stressed that, "looking forward, U.S. assistance to Egypt will not play as significant a role as it has in the past."
END SUMMARY.

BEIRUT TRIP

¶12. (C) On August 9, Gamal Mubarak, Assistant SYG of the National Democratic Party (NDP) and presidential son, briefed Ambassador and visiting Congressman Darrell Issa on his August 8 visit to Beirut at the head of a 70-person Egyptian delegation to "voice solidarity with the Lebanese people." (Note: The delegation included Minister of Information Anas el-Fiqqi, Minister of Trade and Industry Rasheed Mohamed Rasheed, Minister of Health Hatem el-Gabali, several parliamentarians, newspaper editors, entertainers, as well as other notable Egyptians. End note.) Mubarak said the delegation was warmly received by Lebanese President Emile Lahoud, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, and Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, and that all expressed "outrage" at the current situation. Observing that the Egyptian group was a broadly representative "weird combination," Mubarak noted it included, "all segments of Egyptian society - doctors, members of syndicates, different political parties, artists, people whom I disagree with politically, but we were all speaking with one voice, vis-a-vis our anger regarding the killing of civilians, and the U.S. position."

¶13. (C) Mubarak termed the situation in southern Lebanon a "catastrophe," opining that while he "understands the U.S. position, there is no policy objective that can justify sacrificing civilian lives." He remarked that Egyptians are "more angry than they were during the 2000 intifada," and that President Mubarak "has to play a delicate balance ... he has taken a position of principle, but simultaneously does not want to inflame the situation further."

"CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM SESSION" OF PARLIAMENT TO BEGIN IN NOVEMBER

¶14. (C) Queried by Issa on the September NDP party conference and the new parliamentary session beginning in November, Mubarak enthusiastically described his expectation that Egypt will witness the "constitutional reform session" of parliament over the coming year. Noting that President Mubarak had received reports from the Parliament and Shura Council with recommendations for constitutional amendments (reftel), Mubarak said that the anticipated reform agenda "is clear ... last year's campaign platform was not simply slogans ... President Mubarak said exactly what will be changed, and that will happen in the coming parliamentary session." Mubarak mentioned that the actual texts of proposed amendments are not yet available, as "we still need to discuss the details during the NDP conference, and then have an open debate in Parliament in November and December," but stressed that the agenda is clear from the NDP's electoral platform.

¶ 15. (C) Mubarak stated that the upcoming NDP party conference will focus on political and economic reforms, as well as public services such as health care, sewage, transportation, and water. He predicted that the NDP will "review what has been accomplished over the past 9 months, examining both the positives and the negatives." Noting that the "reform process will never end," Mubarak commented, "the skeptics need to understand that change is happening - the evidence is there to demonstrate that we are serious. However, everything depends on what benchmarks are set. If the U.S. wants the entire region to move to full-fledged democracy

within 2-3 years, you will keep having trouble. Setting unrealistic objectives serves no one. Rather, it is crucial to have realistic goals, but to move forward on them. There will undoubtedly be setbacks, but we will keep working for change, with a clear vision and an ambitious, but pragmatic, reform agenda."

U.S. ASSISTANCE BECOMING LESS "SIGNIFICANT", AND "ADVICE" ON USG PUBLIC COMMENTS

¶ 16. (C) As the discussion turned to U.S. financial assistance to Egypt, Mubarak's tone became frustrated. "I understand the nature of things in Washington and Congress. We very much appreciate the assistance the USG has provided Egypt, and it has helped us greatly. But, looking forward, U.S. assistance to Egypt will not play as significant a role as it used to in the past ... let me give you a friendly message: assistance is not the central issue some think it is. Some circles in Washington believe they can stress assistance all the time, and micromanage the relationship with Egypt based on whether we will get \$50 million here or there, because we implemented a particular policy or not ... this is not going to work. This approach is starting to fall increasingly on deaf ears. You should deal in a more constructive manner with us, focusing on the more strategic nature of our relationship, rather than dwelling on micro-issues." Mubarak particularly stressed Egypt's role in the current Lebanon crisis: "Think how different things would be if the GOE was acting differently. The House and Senate need to understand the delicacy and complexity of regional issues, and the centrality of Egypt's position."

¶ 17. (C) Mubarak also offered "a piece of advice" regarding the Secretary's recent comments on "the birth pangs of a new

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Middle East." He advised, "as a friend, I must tell you that these types of messages do not work in this region ... it has totally the opposite effect of what you intend ... That comment in particular has caused outrage, not just from people in the street, but from politicians and intellectuals ..."

¶ 18. (C) On a personal note, Mubarak mentioned that a date has not yet been set for his wedding to fiancee Khadija el-Gammal.

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